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POLYGAMY.

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DEFENCE

OF

POLYGAMY,

BY A LADY OF UTAH,

IN A LETTER TO HER SISTER IN NEW HAMPSHIRE.

GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, Jan. 12, 1854.

DEAR SISTER:

Your letter of Oct. 2nd was received on yesterday. My joy on its reception was more than I can express. I had waited so long for your answer to our last, that I had almost concluded my friends were offended, and would write to me no more. Judge then of my joy when I read the sentiments of friendship and of sisterly affection expressed in your letter.

We are all well here, and are prosperous and happy in our family circle. My children (four in number,) are healthy and cheerful, and fast expanding their physical and intellectual faculties. Health, peace, and prosperity have attended us all the day long.

It seems my dear sister, that we are no nearer together in our religious views than formerly.

Why is this? Are we not all bound to leave this world, with all we possess therein, and reap the reward of our doings *here* in a never ending hereafter?

If so, do we not desire to be undeceived, and to *know and to do the truth?*

Do we not all wish in our very hearts to be sincere with ourselves, and to be honest and frank with each other?

If so, you will bear with me patiently, while I give a few of my reasons for embracing, and holding sacred that particular point in the doctrine of the Church of the Saints, to which you, my dear sister, together with a large majority of Christendom so decidedly object.

I mean, a "*plurality of wives.*"

I have a bible which I have been taught from my infancy, to hold sacred.

In this bible, I read of a Holy man named Abraham, who is represented as the friend of God,—a faithful man in all things,—a man who kept the commandments of God: and who is called in the New Testament, the "Father of the faithful." (See James 2nd, 23.—Rom. 4th: 16th. Gal. 3rd: 8th, 9th, 16th, 29th.)

I find this man had a plurality of wives; some of which were called concubines. (See book of Genesis; and for his concubines, see 25th chap., 6th verse)

I also find his grandson Jacob possessed of four wives, twelve sons and a daughter. These wives are spoken very highly of by the sacred writers as honorable and virtuous women. "*These,*" say the scriptures, "*did build the House of Israel.*"

Jacob himself was also a man of God, and the Lord blessed him and his house, and commanded him to be fruitful and multiply. (See Genesis 30th chap. to 35, and particularly 35 chap., 10th and 11th verses.

I find also that the twelve sons of Jacob by these four wives became princes, heads of tribes, patriarchs, whose names are had in everlasting remembrance to all generations.

Now God talked with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob frequently; and his angels also visited and talked with them, and blessed them and their wives and children. He also reprov'd the sins of some of the sons of Jacob, for hating and selling their brother, and for Adultery. But in all his communications with them, he never condemned their family organization; but on the contrary, always approved of it, and blessed them in this respect.

He even told Abraham, that he would make him the father of many nations, and that in him and his seed, all the nations and kindreds of the earth should be blessed. See Genesis, 18th chap. 17th, 18th and 19th verses: also 12th chap., 1, 2, and 3 verses. In later years I find the plurality of wives perpetuated, sanctioned, and provided for in the law of Moses.

David the Psalmist not only had a plurality of wives, but the Lord himself spoke by the mouth of Nathan the prophet, and told David, that *He* (the Lord,) had given his master's wives into his bosom; but because he had committed adultery with the wife of Uriah, and had caused his murder, *He* would take *his* wives and give them to a neighbor of his, etc. See 2nd Samuel, 12th chap., 7th, to 11th verses.

Here then we have the word of the Lord, not only sanctioning polygamy, but actually giving to King David the wives of his master, (Saul,) and afterward taking the wives of David from him,

and giving them to another man. Here we have a sample of severe reproof and punishment for adultery and murder; while polygamy is authorized and approved by the word of God.

But, to come to the New Testament, I find Jesus Christ speaks very highly of Abraham and his family: He says, "*Many shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.*" Luke, 13 chap., verses 28 and 29.

Again he said, "*If ye were Abraham's seed, ye would do the works of Abraham.*"

Paul the apostle, wrote to the saints of his day, and informed them as follows: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ; and if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

He also sets forth Abraham and Sarah as patterns of faith and good works, and as the father and mother of faithful Christians, who should, by faith and good works, aspire to be counted the sons of Abraham and daughters of Sarah.

Now let us look at some of the works of Sarah, for which she is so highly commended by the Apostles, and by them held up as a pattern for Christian ladies to imitate.

"*Now Sarah, Abram's wife, bare him no children; and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarah said unto Abram, behold now, the Lord hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened unto the voice of Sarah. And Sarah, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and give her to her husband, Abram, to be his wife.*" See Genesis, 16th chap., verses 1, 2, and 3.

According to Jesus Christ and the Apostles, then, the only way to be saved, is to be adopted into the great family of polygamists, by the gospel, and then strictly follow their examples.

Again, John the Revelator describes the Holy City of the Heavenly Jerusalem, with the names of the twelve sons of Jacob inscribed on the gates. Rev. 21: 12.

To sum up the whole then, I find that polygamists were the friends of God,—that the family and lineage of a polygamist was selected, in which all nations should be blessed,—that a polygamist is named in the New Testament as a father of the faithful christians of after ages, and cited as a pattern for all generations. That the wife of a polygamist, who encouraged her husband in the practice of the same, and even urged him into it, and officiated in giving him another wife, is named as an honorable and virtuous woman, a pattern for Christian ladies, and the very mother of all holy wo-

men in the Christian Church, whose aspiration it should be, to be called her daughters.

That Jesus Christ has declared, that the great fathers of the polygamic family stand at the head in the kingdom of God: in short, that all the saved of after generations should be saved by becoming members of a polygamic family; that all those who do not become members of it, are strangers and aliens' to the covenant of promise, the commonwealth of Israel, and not heirs according to the promise made to Abraham.

That all people from the east, west, north or south, who enter into the kingdom, enter into the society of polygamists, and under their Patriarchal rule and government.

Indeed no one can even approach the gates of heaven without beholding the names of twelve polygamists, (the sons of four different women by one man,) engraven in everlasting glory upon the pearly gates.

My dear sister, with the scriptures before me, I could never find it in my heart to reject the Heavenly vision which has restored to man the fulness of the gospel, or the Latter-day Prophets and Apostles, merely because in this restoration is included the ancient law of matrimony and of family organization, and government, preparatory to the restoration of all Israel.

But, leaving all scripture, history, or precedent out of the question, let us come to nature's law.

What then appears to be the great object of the marriage relations? I answer: the multiplying of our species—the rearing and training of children.

To accomplish this object, natural law would dictate, that a husband should remain apart from his wife at certain seasons, which, in the very constitution of the female are untimely. Or in other words, indulgence should not be merely for pleasure, or wanton desires, but mainly for the purpose of procreation.

The morality of nature would teach a mother, that, during nature's process in the formation and growth of embryo man, her heart should be pure, her thoughts and affections chaste, her mind calm, her passions without excitement; while her body should be invigorated with every exercise conducive to health and vigor; but by no means subjected to anything calculated to disturb, irritate, weary, or exhaust any of its functions.

And while a kind husband should nourish, sustain, and comfort the wife of his bosom by every kindness and attention consistent with her situation, and with his most tender affection; still he should refrain from all those untimely associations which are forbidden in the great constitutional laws of female nature; which laws we see carried out in almost the entire animal economy. Human animals excepted.

Polygamy then, as practiced under the Patriarchal law of God, tends directly to the chastity of women, and to sound health and morals in the constitutions of their offspring.

You can read, in the law of God, in your Bible, the times and circumstances under which a woman should remain apart from her husband, during which times she is considered unclean; and should her husband come to her bed under such circumstances, he would commit a gross sin both against the laws of nature, and the wise provisions of God's law, as revealed in his word. In short, he would commit an abomination; he would sin both against his own body—against the body of his wife, and against the laws of procreation, in which the health and morals of his offspring are directly concerned.

The polygamic law of God opens to all vigorous, healthy and virtuous females, a door by which they may become honorable wives of virtuous men, and mothers of faithful, virtuous, healthy, and vigorous children.

And here let me ask you, my dear sister, what female in all New Hampshire would marry a drunkard, a man of hereditary disease, a debauchee, an idler, or a spendthrift; or what woman would become a prostitute; or on the other hand, live and die single; or without forming those inexpressibly dear relationships of wife and mother, if the Abrahamic covenant, or Patriarchal laws of God were extended over your State, and held sacred and honorable by all.

Dear sister, in your thoughtlessness, you inquire, "Why not a plurality of husbands as well as a plurality of wives?"

To which I reply:

1st, God has never commanded or sanctioned a plurality of husbands.

2nd, "*Man is the head of the woman,*" and no woman can serve two lords.

3rd, Such an order of things would work death and not life:—or, in plainer language, it would multiply disease instead of children.

In fact, the experiment of a plurality of husbands, or rather of one woman for many men, is in active operation, and has been, for centuries in all the principal towns and cities of "*Christendom!*"

It is the genius of "*Christian institutions,*" falsely so called. It is the result of "*Mystery Babylon, the great whore of all the earth:*" Or in other words, it is the result of making void the holy ordinances of God in relation to matrimony, and introducing the laws of Rome, in which the clergy and nuns are forbidden to marry, and other members only permitted to have one wife.

This law leaves females exposed to a life of single "*blessedness.*"

without husband, child, or friend to provide for and comfort them. Or to a life of poverty and loneliness, exposed to temptation; to perverted affections; to unlawful means to gratify them; or to the necessity of selling themselves for lucre. While the man who has abundance of means is tempted to spend it on a mistress in secret, and in a lawless way, while the law of God would have given her to him as an honorable wife. These circumstances give rise to murder, infanticide, suicide, disease, remorse, despair, wretchedness, poverty, untimely death, with all the attendant train of jealousies, heartrending miseries, want of confidence in families, contaminating disease etc. And finally, to the horrible license system, in which governments, called Christian, license their fair daughters, I will not say to play the beast, but to a degradation far beneath them; for every species of the animal creation, except man, refrain from such abominable excesses, and observe in a great measure the laws of nature in procreation.

I again repeat, that nature has constituted the female differently from the male; and for a different purpose.

The strength of the female constitution is designed to flow in a stream of *life*, to nourish and sustain the embryo, to bring it forth, and to nurse it on her bosom.

When nature is not in operation within her in these particulars, and for these heavenly ends, it has wisely provided relief at regular periods, in order that her system may be kept pure, and healthy, without exhausting the fountain of life on the one hand, or drying up its river of life on the other; till mature age, and an approaching change of worlds would render it necessary for her to cease to be fruitful, and give her to rest awhile, and enjoy a tranquil life in the midst of that family circle, endeared to her by so many ties,—which may be supposed at this period of her life to be approaching the vigor of manhood, and therefore able to comfort and sustain her.

Not so with man. He has no such draw back upon his strength. It is his to move in a wider sphere. If God shall count him worthy of an hundred fold in this life, of wives and children, and houses and lands and kindreds, he may even aspire to Patriarchal sovereignty, to empire; to be the prince or head of a tribe, or tribes; and like Abraham of old, be able to send forth for the defence of his country, hundreds and thousands of his own warriors, born in his own house.

A noble—man of God, who is full of the spirit of the Most High, and is counted worthy to converse with Jehovah, or with the Son of God; and to associate with angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect: one who will teach his children, and bring them up in the light of unadulterated and eternal truth, is more worthy of

a hundred wives and children, than the ignorant slave of passion, or of vice and folly is to have one wife and one child.

Indeed the God of Abraham is so much better pleased with one than with the other, that he would even take away the one talent, which is habitually abused, neglected, or put to an improper use, and give it to him who has ten talents.

In the Patriarchal order of family government, the wife is bound to the law of her husband. She honors him, "*calls him lord,*" even as Sarah obeyed and honored Abraham. She lives for him, and to increase his glory, his greatness, his kingdom, or family.—Her affections are centered in her God, her husband, and her children.

The children are also under his government worlds without end. "*While life or thought, or being lasts, or immortality endures,*" they are bound to obey him as their father and king.

He also has a head to whom he is responsible. He must keep the commandments of God, and observe his laws. He must not take a wife unless she is given to him by the law and authority of God. He must not commit adultery, nor take liberties with any women except his own, who are secured to him by the holy ordinances of matrimony.

Hence a nation organized under the law of the gospel, or in other words, the law of Abraham, and the patriarchs, would have no institutions tending to licentiousness; no adulteries, fornications, etc., would be tolerated. No houses, or institutions would exist for traffic in shame, or in the life blood of our fair daughters.—Wealthy men would have no inducement to keep a mistress in secret, or unlawfully. Females would have no grounds for temptation in any such lawless life.

Neither money nor pleasure could tempt them, nor poverty drive them to any such excess: because the door would be open for every virtuous female to form the honorable and endearing relationships of wife and mother, in some virtuous family, where love, and peace, and plenty, would crown her days, and truth and the practice of virtue qualify her to be transplanted with her family circle in that eternal soil, where they may multiply their children, without pain, or sorrow, or death; and go on increasing in numbers, in wealth, in greatness, in glory, might, majesty, power and dominion, in worlds without end.

O my dear sister! could the dark veil of tradition be rent from your mind!—could you gaze for a moment on the resurrection of the just!—could you behold Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their wives and children, clad in the bloom, freshness and beauty of immortal *flesh and bones*, clothed in robes of fine, white linen, bedecked with precious stones and gold; and surrounded with an off-

spring of immortals as countless as the stars of the firmament, or as the grains of sand upon the sea shore; over which they reign as kings and queens for ever and ever!—you would then know something of the weight of those words of the sacred writer which are recorded in relation to the four wives of Jacob, the mothers of the twelve patriarchs, namely: “*These did build the house of Israel.*”

O that my dear kindred could but realize that they have need to repent of the sins, ignorances and traditions of those perverted systems which are misnamed “*Christianity*,” and be baptized,—buried in the water, in the likeness of the death and burial of Jesus Christ, and rise to newness of life in the likeness of his resurrection; receive his spirit by the laying on of the hands of an apostle, according to promise, and forsake the world and the pride thereof.

Thus they would be adopted into the family of Abraham,—become his sons and daughters,—see and enjoy for themselves the visions of the spirit of eternal truth, which bear witness of the family order of heaven; and the beauties and glories of eternal kindred ties: for my pen can never describe them.

Dear, *dear* kindred: Remember, according to the New Testament, and the testimony of an ancient apostle, if you are ever saved in the kingdom of God, it must be by being adopted into the family of polygamists—the family of the great Patriarch Abraham: for in his seed, or family, and not out of it, “*shall all the nations and kindreds of the earth be blessed.*”

You say you believe polygamy is “*licentiousness*,” that it is “*abominable*,” “*beastly*,” etc.; “the practice only of the most barbarous nations, or of the dark ages; or of some great or good men, who were left to commit gross sins.”

Yet you say you are anxious for me to be converted to your faith; and that we may see each other in this life, and be associated in one great family, in that life which has no end.

Now in order to comply with your wishes I must renounce the Old and New Testaments;—must count Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and their families as licentious, wicked, beastly, abominable characters; Moses, Nathan, David and the prophets no better. I must look upon the God of Israel as partaker in all these abominations, by holding them in fellowship; and even as a minister of such iniquity, by giving king Saul’s wives into king David’s bosom; and afterwards by taking David’s wives from him, and giving them to his neighbor.

I must consider Jesus Christ, and Paul, and John, as either living in a dark age; as full of the darkness and ignorance of barbarous climes, or else willfully abominable and wicked, in fellowshiping polygamists, and representing them as fathers of the faithful, and rulers in heaven.

I must doom them all to hell with adulterers, fornicators, etc: or else, at least, assign to them some nook or corner in heaven, as ignorant persons, who, knowing but little were beaten with few stripes.

While by analogy, I must learn to consider the Roman Popes, clergy, and nuns who do not marry at all, as foremost in the ranks of glory; and those Catholics and Protestants who have but one wife as next in order of salvation, glory, immortality and eternal life.

Now dear friends, much as I long to see you, and dear as you are to me, I can never come to these terms. I feel as though the gospel had introduced me into the right family, into the right lineage, and into good company. And besides all these considerations, should I ever become so beclouded with unbelief of the scriptures and heavenly institutions, as to agree with my kindred in New Hampshire, in *theory*, still my practical circumstances are different, and would I fear continue to separate us by a wide and almost impassable gulf.

For instance, I have, (as you see, in all good conscience, founded on the word of God,) formed family and kindred ties, which are inexpressibly dear to me; and which I can never bring my feelings to consent to dissolve.

I have a good and virtuous husband whom I love. We have four little children which are mutually and inexpressibly dear to us. And besides this, my husband has seven other living wives, and one who has departed to a better world. He has in all upwards of twenty-five children. All these mothers and children are endeared to me by kindred ties,—by mutual affection—by acquaintance and association; and the mothers in particular by mutual and long continued exercises of toil, patience, long-suffering, and sisterly kindness. We all have our imperfections in this life; but I know that these are good and worthy women, and that my husband is a good and worthy man: one who keeps the commandments of Jesus Christ, and presides in his family like an Abraham. He seeks to provide for them with all diligence; he loves them all, and seeks to comfort them and make them happy. He teaches them the commandments of Jesus Christ, and gathers them about him in the family circle to call upon his God, both morning and evening.

He and his family have the confidence, esteem, good will, and fellowship of this entire Territory, and of a wide circle of acquaintances in Europe and America.

He is a practical teacher of morals and religion; a promoter of general education, and at present occupies an honorable seat in the Legislative Council of this Territory.

Now, as to visiting my kindred in New Hampshire, I would be pleased to do so, were it the will of God. But first, the laws of that State must be so modified by enlightened legislation, and the customs and consciences of its inhabitants, and of my kindred, so altered, that my husband can accompany me with all his wives and children, and be as much respected and honored in his family organization, and in his holy calling as he is at home: or in the same manner as the patriarch Jacob would have been respected had he, with his wives and children, paid a visit to his kindred.

As my husband is yet in his youth, as well as myself, I fondly hope we shall live to see that day.

For already the star of Jacob is in the ascendency; the House of Israel is about to be restored: while "*Mystery Babylon*," with all her institutions awaits her own overthrow.

Till this is the case in New Hampshire, my kindred will be under the necessity of coming here to see us, or on the other hand we will be mutually compelled to forego the pleasure of each others company.

You mention in your letter, that Paul, the apostle, recommended that bishops be the husband of one wife. Why this was the case I do not know, unless it was as he says, that while he was among Romans he did as Romans did. Rome, at that time governed the world as it were; and although gross idolators, they held to the one wife system. Under these circumstances no doubt, the apostle Paul, seeing a great many polygamists in the Church, recommended that they had better choose for this particular temporal office, men of small families, who would not be in disrepute with the government. This is precisely our course in those countries where Roman institutions still bear sway. Our elders there have but one wife, in order to conform to the laws of men.

You enquire why Elder W., when at your house, denied that the Church of this age held to the doctrine of plurality. I answer, that he might have been ignorant of the fact, as our belief on this point was not published till 1852. And had he known it he had no right to reveal the same until the full time had arrived.

God kindly withheld this doctrine for a time, because of the ignorance and prejudice of the nations of Mystic Babylon, that peradventure he might save some of them.

Now, dear sister, I must close; I wish all my kindred and old acquaintance to see this letter, or a copy thereof; and that they will consider it as if written to themselves. I love them dearly, and greatly desire and pray for their salvation, and that we may all meet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God.

Dear sister, do not let your prejudices and traditions keep you from believing the Bible; nor the pride, shame, or love of the

world keep you from your seat in the kingdom of heaven, among the royal family of polygamists. Write often and freely.

With sentiments of the deepest affection and kindred feeling, I remain, dear sister, your affectionate sister,

BELINDA MARDEN PRATT.

Mrs. Lydia Kimball, Nashua, N. H.

P. S. My kind love to your husband, and all enquiring friends.

